

CIACO NID 81 [REDACTED]

April 23, 1981

POLAND: Religious Leader's Illness

Cardinal Wyszynski is reported to be terminally ill. His death will have a profound effect on all Poles and will also affect the moderating role the Church has played during the 10-month crisis. There has been no significant change in the status of Warsaw Pact forces in and around Poland. The Soviets have engaged in more criticism of the Polish party leadership. [REDACTED]

A priest in the Cardinal's office told [REDACTED] yesterday that although Wyszynski is still able to move around and is lucid, his doctors are convinced that he may have no more than two months to live. Wyszynski probably is suffering from a gastrointestinal malignancy that has spread. [REDACTED]

Wyszynski's death will have a sobering effect on all Poles and could temporarily push political issues into the background. He has played an important moderating role in the Polish crisis primarily because of his personal prestige and authority as the man who headed the Church for over 30 years. [REDACTED]

The Cardinal has close ties with Solidarity leader Walesa and has been effective in urging caution on the new union. No successor can fill his shoes in this regard in the short term. [REDACTED]

As it searches for a new leader, the Church may take a less visible public role in trying to lessen tension between Solidarity and the government. The selection of a successor also may bring forward the differences within the Church hierarchy about what the Church's role should be. [REDACTED]

Some bishops have criticized Wyszynski for being too moderate and taking the regime's side too often. They would favor a more forthright stand in favor of Solidarity. Although Church leaders will try to maintain unity on such questions, this will be more difficult without the Cardinal. [REDACTED]

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Under Polish law, the regime has the right to veto the Church's candidate to succeed Wyszynski. The Church probably is in a fairly good position, however, to have its choice accepted. Government leaders are aware of their own weakness and lack of standing with the population. They also realize that tension would increase quickly if they appeared to be stalling on the issue. [REDACTED]

Military Situation

Soviet troop rotation continues and all available evidence to date indicates a normal pattern. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Soviet Criticism

A public lecture on the Polish situation on Sunday in Leningrad indicates that despite two official professions of confidence in the Polish leadership in the past week, there is still a strong Soviet belief that solutions to Poland's fundamental problems are further away than ever. [REDACTED]

Such foreign affairs lectures usually deal more frankly with issues than do the Soviet media, and the speaker's comments reflect party guidance. He contended that the Polish party was split by calls from below for reform and was thus hindered from taking decisive action against unrest. The speaker cited public criticism of the party leadership by the rank and file early this month at a meeting attended by party leader Kania as proof of how low the party's "ideological readiness" had sunk. [REDACTED]

In an especially serious charge, the lecturer asserted that the Polish party had lost control over the media and that the Soviet press rarely quoted the Polish party organ because it publishes "antisocialist

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material." He also said that Solidarity was infiltrating and heavily influencing the party, the government, and even the military. [REDACTED]

The speaker's only favorable remarks were about Polish Politburo hardliners Olszowski and Grabski. In contrast to his implicit criticism of Kania, he called them supporters of "decisive measures." [REDACTED]

Politburo member Chernenko, in his comments yesterday on the Polish internal situation, declared that "any deviation from Marxism-Leninism" has to be paid for dearly. Chernenko's statements were much less positive than those made by President Brezhnev at the Czechoslovak party congress and by propaganda chief Zamyatin on Sunday. They were, however, similar to Politburo member Suslov's remarks at the East German party congress. [REDACTED]
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